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A Monday trip to the U.S.-Mexico border left Newport Beach Rep. John Campbell convinced that American authorities have made progress in preventing illegal crossings, and things are on the way to getting even better.

The U.S. doesn't yet have full control of its borders, but we're getting there, Campbell said in a phone interview after his border visit.

"I was pleased to see how much progress we have made," he said.

Locally, immigration is a hot topic that's become part of Costa Mesa's election dialogue. The City Council in December voted to train police for immigration enforcement, and now Mayor Allan Mansoor — who spearheaded the plan — is up for reelection.

State Assemblyman Chuck DeVore, who holds the seat where Campbell started his political career in 2000, will hold an immigration reform hearing with other state GOP lawmakers Wednesday in Tustin. Mansoor will be among the panelists.

Campbell's border visit allowed him to see firsthand the problems Congress has been trying to solve.

"I would say my impressions were ... that we have made a tremendous amount of progress since the amnesty period of the late '80s," Campbell said. "They [border patrol officials] said back in 1995 they believe they were catching about 25% of the illegal crossings. They now believe they are catching about 80%, which is a dramatic improvement."

Campbell visited officials who monitor the border from the Pacific Ocean to about 60 miles

inland, saw a commercial crossing at Otay Mesa and went to the San Ysidro station, the world's largest surface crossing between two countries.

Border patrol officials told him they need a double fence with a drivable road in between, and electronic measures like sensors that alert them when someone jumps the fence.

They're also interested in an ID card that would give border patrol officers more information than state drivers' licenses and would help legal immigrants get across the border faster.

After hearing that, Campbell said he believes Congress is heading in the right direction with plans for a border fence, approved in September.

His trip to the border, he said, "just confirms for me that we're doing the right thing."

An August article in USA Today called the border "one of the hottest campaign stops" for politicians running in November, but Campbell said pictures of his visit were hard to get because he was often stuck in a car.

"I didn't want to say, 'Let me get out for a photo op,'" he said. "That wasn't why I was there."